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TWO ESSAYS ON THE REMNANT

BY JOHN EGLINTON

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BY JOHN EGLINTON

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Forte quid expediat communiter aut MELIOR PARS
Malis carere quaeritis laboribus:
Nulla sit hac potior sententia—Phocaeorum
Velut profugit exsecrata civitas
Agros atque lares patrios habitandaque fana
Apris reliquit et rapacibus lupis—
Ire pedes quocunque ferent, quocunque per undas
Notus vocabit aut protervus Africus.
Sic placet? An melius quis habet suadere? Secunda
Ratem occupare quid moramur alite?

991463

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PREFACE

WHILE the State was still on the rise of evolution, the motive from within, the impulse to go forward, was supplied naturally and inevitably in the enthusiasm of its young men. The approach to maturity was then more of a crisis than at present, and was signalled by the cropping-up in a youth of a crowd of elemental opinions, sown by the Zeit-geist (word of fear!) and threatening, like the hungry ears of corn, to eat up the kindly domestic growth of affections and prejudices which were nourished in the bosom of a good citizen. These wild oats, however, as parents knew, meant little more than that the young man was beginning to be a political animal in earnest, or a man; and presently common-sense, glittering perhaps upon him from its favourite seat in fair female eyes, would warn him that he must approve his virility some other way. He accordingly put his sentiments in his pocket, took stoutly to sword or ledger, succeeded, married, and soon had young Radicals of his own to snub. We have changed all that. The Conservative party, or that party which has no politics, is now mainly

recruited from the ranks of young men, who receive with smiling sagacity the neanicisms of their elders.

Side by side with this remark on the hopeless conservatism of our young men, we will note the gradual drawing together, as to a common point of view, of the children of this world and the children of light. In religion, for instance, the maxims which make for righteousness are but technically distinguishable from those which will further a man in social and monetary success; and the Church, which so often advertises in its programme that very fact, seems now so inextricably implicated with temporal conditions that it is hard to conceive, not only how it could weather its transplantation, at the end of time, into eternity, but even how it could survive any rude shock dealt to the social system. As captive Greece led captive her rude conqueror—in the same sense have the people of God modified custom and character of the children of this world, whose gay young sparks twit their own kinsmen nowadays with 'Philistinism.' And on their side the Chosen People, in the midst of so much geniality, esprit, and distraction, have for a long time waived any intention of setting forward toward the promised land, and are now indeed suffering even the tradition thereof to pass from their minds.

The sagacious Aristotle, in his consideration of a 'city,' or State, forbore to concern his fancy like Plato with an ideal republic, but contented it with one which should be a thorough success—as much so as the republics of the bee and the ant, which indeed seem to have supplied him with several hints. The members of such a State should consist, he said, of males, females, and workers. Now, one deeply interesting vein of thought

springs out of a chance reflection which detains him a moment at starting. He cannot hide from himself that human nature ramifies and develops strangely and unexpectedly. Whatever arrangements his ingenuity can devise are to be independent, he gives you to understand, of two individuals, whom he names respectively the 'brute' and the 'god.'[1] If either of these, he feels, should get into his city all may be retarded or upset; and accordingly, by implication, he from the outset excludes them. Aristotle lived and wrote before the divine of human nature had received so considerable an impetus with the Christian era; otherwise he might have been willing to face the contingency that a State may ever and anon as it proceeds develop gods, or at least individuals answering to his own definition. Quite possibly he would have suggested some method of drafting them away (otherwise than by hemlock) and detaching them, providing them perhaps with some adequate and beneficent function. As it is with us now, the presence together of the divine and brutal in the social system brings about emergencies for which he has made but little provision. London, the most conspicuous city which human beings have yet done, has not been a thorough success, as the social systems of the bee and the ant are successes; and although these appear but small affairs in comparison with the superb workings of London—the tidal, irresistible stress of its daily business and trikumia of its morning news-issue—though they can show nothing to touch, say only, the penny postage—yet it is to those simple but venerable

[1] His words are, 'Whoever is unable to join, or does not need on account of self-sufficiency, forms no portion of a State: since he is either a brute or a god.'

constitutions that prophet and philosopher, as they begin to appear, direct, with their inscrutable smile, the Naamans of civilization.

Yes, man is in general a political, a social animal, but not so are gods; whether because that is 'their nature,' or by necessity, because there are not swarms or cities of such. And as a mother rears up with all endearment her children, only to see them at a touch of manhood detach and stand off by themselves, yet is instructed to feel satisfied; so the State, the fairest and best appointed of States, and the city compactly built together, brings forth a few 'gods,' who depart from her and come not again, even when sorrow comes upon her in her old age. Who shall gainsay our doctrine of the Remnant, uttered alike by solemn Jew, quick-glancing Greek, and haughty Roman? To thee therefore, London, mother also of gods, hail! We know not whom thou hast yet in store!

Sentiment du départ, cher a tous les hommes jeunes et vaillants! Sentiment du départ guerrier! But our Tyrtaeus is some egregious Walt Whitman, celebrating with his spasmodic inspiration untold disruption; and there is Tolstoi, our chief of men, calling upon the race to live no more. Who is sufficient for these things? Would we not leap to the call of some truly magnanimous bard; or if one should come and reveal unto us, a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, the cause of Idealism, would we not follow whithersoever it should lead? The perfect call, we think, should have the perfect answer. Too many people would be wrong, said Diderot, if Jean Jacques were right! But nowadays—the Remnant having ripened since then through a versicoloured bloom of art

and song, to the point of caducity—one may perhaps reverse the adjectives. Not in laughterous communities must we inherit the earth now, but must drop away silently and singly—or, as Aristotle might have said, as 'gods'—obeying each his inward monition. For in defect of a brazen-throated bard or the prophet's plague-working wand, Necessity is a great ally.

VOX CLAMANTIS

B

I

VOX CLAMANTIS

IT takes genius to be honest: hence the lies on tombstones. Epitaphs, indeed, do not aim at very much: and a false epitaph, to commemorate a false life, has so much to be said for it. Even now, that sombre-suited crowd of mourners, dispersing swiftly, yet with subdued manners, toward the city, have been discharging over the citizens whom they abandon to morning and to me, a parting salute of lies.

De mortuis nil nisi bonum—nay, I will let my tongue wag a little now. What harm? Besides, when these people were alive one could say very little, and there was very little to be said. They were employed and we were Unemployed, they fortunate and we miserable,—what then? We but wanted to be what they *were*. I have no doubt now that, had they been in our place and we in theirs, the facts would have rested objectively the same. Nay,

rather say at once, these men were the fittest and we the unfit. Yes, believe it, dear friends and brethren in idleness, it was Nature's self who detached us from that rude civic struggle, whose progress we cumbered and still cumber. It was all a wretched misunderstanding. If Providence seemed a fair-weather friend and well-inclined only toward a working concern like the general body of civic interests, what reason lay therein for hating as we did these benevolent bankers, these eupeptic merchants, mild parsons, uncorrupt lawyers, and doctors with healing fingers? Why not accept a fact? Fie on your bombs, ye Anarchists! That is a poor way of pilfering Nature's pockets! How far better, even perhaps from your own point of view, to utilize that leisure which Providence in its rigour affords you, to stand back and let thought run into irrefragable generalizations, marking from time to time amid the smoke loom up its own portentous apparition, tending the furnace! There is compensation in all things, believe it. How well I understand now the absurdity of my own mood during those two dark years I spent in London, trying in vain to catch on as a citizen. How clear now appears to me the right of these men—which I then questioned—to smile at my dark looks, which the passing sheen of their tall hats in the sun was sufficient to fix upon them. I had no business there and they had. But how could I so long disguise from myself that truth? The reason was, that I had ceased to believe in Providence,

which, indeed, at that time, and quite rightly, would have nothing to say to me, while it quickened their footsteps and added presumption to their gaze and kept the mighty machinery of their daily life clanging without mischance. For this strange thing happened to me, that the humbler became, perforce, my civic aspirations, the more exorbitant grew my desire to re-establish my *rapport* with God and Nature. So, one fine morning, in sheer despair I walked out of London; and that evening found me already far away down a Western high-road, recovering my spirits at every step. A planet, mistress of that season, hung above my path; and when the next morning dawned I had deviated without knowing it into an unknown land, full of meditative hollows, where I remained for a summer, catching my food in the stream and sleeping below the wood-pigeons.

Yet I began angrily and meant to be angry and still mean to—for I return now, halting in this suburban cemetery, and if armed not with bombs but with generalizations, that is only because I think I can handle these better and with less risk to myself, and because I have more confidence in them. That momentary mood which overtook me was, perhaps, something like what the poet figures—

> 'Pity, the violet on the tyrant's grave.'

For, say what you will of them, and let their epitaphs display what sentiments they please, these men were

tyrants, keeping up an obsolete system unreasonably, depraving the clear ambitions of youth, corrupting the poets, honouring false prophets, crucifying true ones, audacious in cowardice, and armed with abuses. Affection, ignorance, and fear compose the tyrant's mood. Bound up with aged associations, blindfolded to the truth, and abhorring the future, these men were what they were. You are not wise, ye merchants and magistrates, believe it. Yet what can you do? It may be, you can do nothing else. But be assured, you are not wise. Misery is a great generalizer. Those cold regions in which the spirits of the unsuccessful hover, precipitate thought in fracturing phrases. Though we fail, have we not love, hope, anger? and if nothing but these, then must we arm ourselves with these.

No, I cannot forget how they forced their conception of Providence on me with their dreadful formula: To each his function! and how confidingly I went about looking for mine, wondering naïvely at all times what it could be, till resigning myself at last to the natural operation of despair, that little sluice carried me down in no time to the sun-lit oceans of Belief. As Keats says:

> 'For that reason, that ye were the kings,
> And only blind from sheer supremacy,
> One avenue was shadow'd from your eyes,
> Thro' which I wander'd to eternal truth.'

To confess the fact unashamed, I had begun to think

I might eke out some small competency by the sale of my ideas. I carried my glittering wares, at all events, to some publishers and magazine-editors. It was no brisk business, the ideal trade, yet the thing had been done: and thus when some rare thought, such as might have cheered Ezekiel, crossed me—as one would now and then—it seemed here was a way of rehabilitating myself with my landlady. The middlemen just mentioned, however, declared to me for the most part that the markets were flooded with thoughts, and that the supply far outran the demand; besides, I need not say how reluctant to appear are these shining essences when wanted for material ends.

'Call no man happy till he dies'—I never called you happy when you lived, not even when I envied you. I had no idea but that when, having turned my back on God (according to the saying) for six years, I had caught on as a citizen, and become, who knows? the Dick Whittington of Idealism, I should revert to the divine tradition and reach down ideas to my fellow-citizens. The fact is, these men had bullied me into thinking that character and truth were two mutually exclusive departments of life. I rebuked myself with the spectacle of London's labours. I said, Had I but the mechanical force and accuracy of these men, what a thing would the truth be in me! My attitude toward truth at that time had some similarity to that of Colonel Lovelace

toward Althea on going to the wars—'I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not honour more!' I had a friend in my beechen solitude who said, when I consulted him on these matters, 'It is passion which instigates them!' And turning the pages of his book, he read, 'The senses and organs are esteemed great, but the thinking self is greater than they. The discriminating principle is greater than the thinking self, and that which is greater than the discriminating principle is He.'

Perhaps it may seem strange that I should take my merry masters of last year as if they were all lying here. Some of them perhaps are, and others no doubt rent some of these vaults, thinking as little as may be of their property once the insurance doctor has passed them. My funeral oration, however, will hold good over their cenotaphs. What though we had them here indeed,—we should then have their names, their dates, and most likely a citation of the Hebrew Scriptures. In fact, the dates are not bad: but there is this about dates, that they are by their nature auxiliary to other interests; by themselves, we knew them before. The text, on the other hand, —well, it is not their own. What, citizen! not a verse, not a couplet has your life yielded—you that have been to school, as the Romans said, to learn eloquence? A heavy price the gods exact for citizenship! As for me and my companions, who will be laid perhaps in some outlying tract of this place

under green mounds less articulate than these lettered slabs, or under the flowing sea, or in square penal yards—we will not all die, we will leave our generalizations behind us : the evil we have done will live after us. This is a pauper's burial-ground in this sense, that I question if one of these citizens will have an obol to give Charon underground. As for me and my companions, we will go down with our generalizations in our mouths ; but that was too impalpable a coinage to press on their tongues at the extreme hour. They had known, or thought they knew, metal more attractive. A green mound above the tiller of the soil is mutely eloquent, but here surely is no adequate memorial or apologia for citizens whose manner of life was so proud a superstructure on the primitive conditions of life. There is no hint of a mute inglorious Milton having smouldered beneath that formalism ; and after all *would* Milton have been Milton had he been mute ?

Far be it from me to deny our debt to our dead ancestors. For one thing, it was their pleasant duty to pass on to us the torch of life, for which we may or may not feel ourselves obliged to them: but in any case, accepting our being here, a more real debt remains due to them for the great legacy of tradition and tendency, where these are real, which survive in us to prompt us : especially for that large river of speech, which bears down upon our living souls the intimate experience of every soul over which it has poured.

For things such as these we cannot, I advise, too highly thank and praise them : nor can we with fairness blame them, my unemployed brothers, if they have made no suitable provision for intelligent, though incapable and supernumerary, descendants like ourselves. If we are to succeed as a party we must define our position and formulate independent claims. We must assume that the faculty of generalization, appearing in us, denotes us as those with whom the transmission of the eternal cell of human progress is vested. We must assert that the true heirs are those whose unchallenged birthright is truth ; and that our civic supplanters have, it is true, a certain significance and value collateral with ours, but that their prosperity is detached and phantasmal—they themselves, as we see, dropping dumbly one by one into their tombs, and leaving not a rack behind.

But someone will say, 'Pray, not so fast ! These men were indeed as you say "citizens," servants of a great State, in which they played their part humbly and quitted themselves like men. If you would find fault with them because, when they came by on the road, their neighbours cried, not, "There goes a man, a living being !" nor even, "There goes Armstrong, or Smith !" but, "There goes the clergyman, the doctor, the lawyer !" or so forth, as if their humanity were swallowed up in their civic capacity—why then, I ask, is this not something, that Armstrong, that Smith, so insignificant and inarticulate merely as

men or living beings, should stand on the other hand for component units of one of those superb communities which are advancing amid the indifference of Nature from savagery to all excellence? These underlying considerations of man's divinity and mystery come rarely uppermost. In the intervals of functioning as citizens, Armstrong the clergyman and Smith the doctor may replenish themselves with worship and science. But for the most part, when you see them hurry by in the street, you need not hesitate to call them, for all intents and purposes, the doctor and the clergyman, and after their deaths they may so be remembered.'

In answer to this, let us declare directly what has hitherto been implied, that certain individuals, like myself, who have done their best to catch on as citizens, but failed, either because there was no demand for their peculiar facility or because such business as was offered them seemed a profanation of their minds, cannot or will not surrender their sympathies to that system of civilization in which, as we say, Armstrong and Smith swink by day and slumber by night so wholeheartedly. Smith may feel without saying it—how much more I should love him if he would!—that the advance of civilization is by a survival of the fittest, and that, in setting me down, civilization leaves with me the contemplation of the tireless renewals and transformations toward which it sweeps Armstrong and him. Such,

however, are by no means the thoughts which occupy the idle clusters of the unemployed—who desist at length from catching at the skirts of progress. In this survival of the fittest—namely, such as Armstrong and Smith—these others, the unfit, standing by, follow the fortunes of their naturally-selected brethren with raillery and vituperation. To us lapsed masses it appears that civilization, instead of being a comprehensive commonwealth of all those who are able and willing to work—the solidarity of thinking beings—is becoming more and more of a *party;* and that the other party, our own, consisting of the unfit and the unemployed—not a respectable one conventionally, yet having like Shylock hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions—is growing daily larger and more eminent. We declare that civilization is advancing, in so far as it is doing so, with a velocity acquired before it had begun to discard the services of such persons as ourselves; and that since it has begun this it is gradually coming to a standstill. The rapidity with which its wheels are revolving is due, according to us, less to an increase of applied human power than to a decrease of solid work done for humanity. Even the generous schemes of Socialists, or such an enthusiasm, say, as that for a reformed spelling, and the like, presume too much, in our opinion, on the notion of the indefinite expansion of civilization. There is no doubt that some of us speak, if not with authority,

yet with the iteration of conviction : and such of us as can still subsist for a while on the fag-ends of wages and patrimonies remaining over in our pockets have much leisure for sharpening our wits in reflection and reading. The best friends of the existing order of things might indeed do well to hesitate a little more than they do in turning off incompetent or supernumerary hands, not knowing what gall these incapable young men may secrete in adversity nor what arms rage may find for them.

Man, as we know him, differs in this from the lower animals, that whereas with them a number of instincts exactly proportioned to their condition discover themselves from birth, he grows up a dreamy boy, expecting a life of love, fame and happiness, and when about a quarter of his journey through life comes a rude fall with all his ideals, and goes the rest of his way dissipating his attention with talk. For a considerable time now men have accepted this state of things, adapting to it their government and religion, and whole method of life, so that the general discontent might evaporate harmlessly in the private cynicism and atheism of individuals, and affect as little as possible the safeguards of society. Nature takes sides against herself ; and one cannot properly call these precautions any more *unnatural* than those individual instincts which emerge so jubilantly and perish so prematurely. In nature, however, matters converge now and then to crises—

human nature too has its thunderstorms: and no doubt some decision will ultimately burst spontaneously among us upon this problem of whether the nations, having chosen originally the path of least resistance to common progress, are to continue to force themselves forward artificially and against the pleasure of the individual. Thus in modern Europe we see the nations preserving the manners of barbarians and threatening one another with long Homeric preambles across their channels and mountain-barriers, while the best persons in each nation are finding the best range for their true activities in a life of thought. Instead of being incredibly superior to each of its units the State is now centuries behindhand. War must henceforth be a knocking together of these old bottles to break them.

Civilization has in its start and growth the natural and inevitable beauty of a plant, or a girl; but when its charms are going and it has to maintain its bloom and contours with rouge and heaven knows what, the Rousseaus and Tolstois break away from it saying coarse things. In the time of Chaucer the English nation is as fair as a rosebud, and its poets babble of spring: but a couple of centuries later, when Queen Elizabeth was pondering whether she could not in some way restrain London's further growth, its expanded petals were falling away in a shower of dramas and epics. 'Nothing is perfect,' as the French financier Necker observed, 'except for a

moment.' A city is nature's doing, and London her hugest flower by the river's brim, but primroses are preferable when London begins to run to seed. Nothing could possibly restrain communities from coagulating into cities, where comfort will in time engender delight, delight thought, thought discontent and disintegration. To call civilization a failure will not help us very much. Of course it is a failure :—not, however, because it is a scheme erected by man in the teeth of nature, but because nature is no longer in it as a coherent whole. She subsists nevertheless, and with concentrated energy, in the individual, who drops away and rolls off by by himself to the wood or the seashore with a swelling potentiality of thought in his bosom. What disgusts the Rousseaus and Tolstois in our present vacillating conduct is not, so to speak, that we have gone to sea in a ship, but that when the ship has foundered we cling to the doomed hulk instead of saving ourselves on the spars that ride the waves around it, and getting to the green valleys that shine through the mist. It is the way of ships of State thus to founder at the last moment within sight of shore, yet in such a way that no hands need be lost.

Civilization ceases to be a good thing with the belief in God, as the Neckers and Gladstones know. When men are growing up in a community they recognize the tendencies on which they are advanc-

ing, and to deviate from these tendencies, to refuse homage to Aphrodite or Apollo, seems an impious and fatal folly. When men have already grown, however, these tendencies are no longer manifest or efficient in their lives, and some teacher starts up with the announcement that all this time the Kingdom of God has been germinating within them—a joyous discovery to as many as receive it. The conceptions of single men become then as great as the racial traditions. No one who has grasped the conception that the part repeats the whole will assent to the permanent subordination of the individual to an outward institution.

The test of the state of civilization is therefore quite simple—whether in assisting it the individual is astride of his proper instincts. If in gratifying his deepest and truest inclinations he is subserving the general end, then of that civilization it may be said that it is growing and prospering, and that Nature is in it. When, on the other hand, a man does some violence to his own nature in adhering to the parent bulk; when its character and aspirations are not repeated in him; when his duty to himself runs counter to his outward obligations; when the component parts of the State, its institutions, must have mainstays passed round them to hold them together; when the family is no longer the State in miniature, and woman demurs to what is expected of her; when the populace breaks over its natural barriers; when

the faculty of building ceases ; when the Ideal and the Practical seem mutually antagonistic, and the youth must crush his genius into his cleverness if he will catch on as a citizen,—then of that State it may be said that its day, as a State, is over ; that nature is no longer in it ; and that endless disintegration is its portion. Look at some youthful city compactly built together, rising abrupt on the plains of which she is mistress—I mean no Utopia nor ideal republic, but simply a young barbaric town that one may fancy. From the engirdling walls to the threatening citadel every hearth is kindled : there is noise of cutting and chopping and grinding, a bee-like susurration of homogeneous employment ; the sun-lit smoke is this city's breath, drawn freely from lungs nowhere decrepit. The young men exercise in the fields, the old men sit in council, and at sunset the daughters leap down the street to the dance. Look upon that picture, then upon this. No foe from without has availed to burst the walls of that town, but excess of life, sun-nurtured, has broken them from within. The city has overthrown its boundaries and poured out upon the plain, its outlines are gone, it is formless. Ask these people where they live, and they will give you the name of that ancient city. But they no longer live there—they are a stationary horde. Why not begin to move away ? 'Ah,' say many who would not consciously acknowledge themselves slaves to their fellow-men, 'London is a great tyrant !'

There it is! Yet does it not occur to these myriads that the thing which they serve is a figment: that London is—Londoners?

One pretty certain indication of a reversion to barbarism already begun in Europe is the cropping up amongst our civic brethren of what is called the 'Woman's Question.' Henceforth, when we see among the barbarian inheritors of lapsed civilizations the women doing the men's work, we will know that this is probably the woman's choice and claim in time past, when, as with our brethren, their civilization was beginning to topple over. After man has for centuries been doing his utmost for woman, given her leisure, comfort, and security, and asked nothing in requital but her smile; expended incredible labour, resource, and ingenuity, in procuring her the soft life which her temperament demands; sunk myriads of lives in the guarantee and maintenance of the security of the home which she requires and loves —women are now, at the crowning moment, about to spoil the whole situation by what is apparently a capricious and ungrateful refusal of his services. Cushions and carpets, the steam-engine and the telegraph—none of these advantages would have been thought of but for the incentive and provocation of her smile; and man made them—not one of them did woman make for herself. For her sake he abandoned the prairie and the hill-side, the joys of the hunt and of the flood, and in low-lying plains

subjected his intelligence to king and priest. The desire of the male, conscious or implicit, to please and gratify the female, is the mainspring in the working out of civilization : without chivalry, civilization is a watch unwound. In the midst of that comfort in which they live and move, which man got for them, and which they retain, certain women of the more fortunate classes are beginning to hint that they can now get on tolerably well by themselves. If it were a daring and an heroic rejection of him, as because he was not worthy, then, indeed, this spectacle would be grand and poetic, even if tragical to our civic friends : if we saw these women coming forth into the wilderness to endure suffering and privation rather than misunderstanding and wrong, we should see also, assuredly, male spirits nobly matched with theirs. But it is not so. They have no wish or intention to lose hold of such advantages as their prestige has brought them. Not one delicacy will they let go—neither soft-lined houses, nor costly raiment, nor the long lamp-lit dining-table, nor the frequently-arriving post, nor new books. They fling not from their bosoms the pearls for which man has groped the seas. And man, knowing well that if he has sinned in time past they have sinned with him, and looking half remorsefully upon them, feels half disposed to relinquish to them the 'rights' which have begun to grow meaningless and valueless to himself. 'Yes,' he will say presently, 'you may

sit in the House of Commons—if you like!' Thus is woman coming in with the Chinee: and our civic brother, not with complacency but with resignation, makes way to her.

I own that in assailing, with the best intentions in the world, the social system, I am repeatedly embarrassed by the thought of those excellent citizens, my friends. None of these good kind people seem anything like the monster which they help to compose. The good old clergyman, my uncle, with his countless untold charities, bore no resemblance to that corrupt hypocrite, his prototype, the symbol of ecclesiastical tyranny. The merchants I have known were no such bloodless machines as that figment of my spleen, the money-grabber: they listened to the tales of mendicants, in whose faces, had I possessed a door, I should have slammed it. How willingly, then, would I not have dealt with them as I knew them—my fathers and brethren; but the social system with which their lives and energies were implicated has compelled me to deal with them in the gross. And indeed I must add that when one had chanced to rub them the wrong way, certain instincts were often ready to reveal a repetition of the whole in the part.

But now, if without bitterness I turn once again to London, on a mere trivial quest, yet half eager to hear again, though that dull banausic murmur of

a million chariots, the stifled music of humanity; and if, beholding the prolonged decay of that great celandine, I can mutter free from spleen,

> 'This neither is its courage nor its choice,
> But its necessity in being old'—

to whom do I owe it but unto thee, mild light of the nineteenth century, whose name was as a far-fluttering unattainable carol to me in my prison, thou first and greatest of the Unemployed! first-fruits with us of civilization, as Shakspeare with all his gay compeers was the full blossom! How little shall it irk me now, an oblique criticism out of the Londoner's shallow brown eye! How much more respectable, I shall consider with myself, in any true sense of the word, is an old coat than a new! To one how much more truly than to the other doth hang a tale! All things in nature deck themselves out of the pride and elation of individuality: the Londoner alone dresses to avoid notice. I shall bethink me that I am free, and advertise my vagrancy, nor too softly compassionate my busy scorners. With an eye stored with memories of my lonely roads, I will peruse the system whose strings their movements keep pulling. Were it something consistently grandiose, did the details not fall so deplorably behind the general idea, the philosopher might overcome his repugnance and subordinate himself with this glossy mob. But from a broad acquiescence in

the social system it seems but a step to an acquiescence in convention and its 1,001 curious infelicities : an acquiescence in tall hats and the insane apologetic behaviour of civilized men toward one another ; in the right of overlings to demand from me my costly morning hours, which I should deliver up and hear nothing more of them. If acquiescence meant simply, say, for the philosopher, as for Israel in Egypt, the moulding of so many bricks per day, with or without straw, a simple homogeneous task like that, how willingly would I lend a hand ! what absolutely conscientious bricks I should turn out ! assimilating into the rigorous concatenation of the thoughts which I could meanwhile pursue even the abrupt sensation now and then of the taskmaster's scourge. My hand I can give, willingly enough, but my mind I grudge : and it is my mind which Convention would seal for her own with a tall hat.— I will think once again, as I thought often in my misery, of that raw North-country youth, who, a century ago, seeking like myself to catch on as a citizen, walked up and down in London—its multitudinous houses taking a certain splendour at that time in the ruddy sunsets of the French Revolution era. A completely mild and innocuous thing it seemed, that strange rapture to which this young man was liable in his walks : and the quick-eyed citizens of London doubtless glanced, after the manner which still obtains with them, at his hat and

boots, rapidly deducing how much there might be to be reckoned with between these extremities from the condition in which they, the outworks of the personality, were kept. And could their sharp eyes have pierced to his mind they would have found for the most part the healthful vacuity of a mind at ease, traversed ever and anon by tender breeze-like memories and imaginations of a happy childhood spent amid the distant mountains. Here, the most irrelevant figure in Cheapside, he catches the song of a captive thrush at the corner of Wood Street, and forthwith these imaginations that attend him throng upon him :

> 'Bright volumes of vapour thro' Lothbury glide,
> And a river runs on thro' the Vale of Cheapside!'

Seize him, ye Londoners! It is a treachery! He is no Gallic emissary, but worse! He is in league with the green hosts of trees, whose patient barbaric siege ye have put back so long from year to year, and of the countless horde of grass that springs in the breaches of ruins and in the interstices of depopulate pavements! He has been reared among them, and he has not forgotten the friends of his youth. They have crooned him into infant sleep with their murmurings, bewitching him. And now he is glamoured and sees not the hurrying people who jostle him; he exults no longer in citizenship, and the flush of patriotism is withered within him: he exults in the green light beneath trees, or in blue

glimpses of woodland water. Already he sees, or thinks he sees, his hermitage by the lake shore. Yet the young man is able-bodied enough, with no physical defect such as in Sparta would have decided the magistrates to expose him as soon as born : and but for that primal glimpse of Nature Einosiphyllos —tremulous with leaves—which has unsettled him, there might be the makings of a bishop in him, as there were in his brother, or, who knows ? of a Lord Chancellor. It is just this indeed which makes his defection so significant as it must be regarded, that a latent Lord Chancellor, or bishop, or other eminent citizen, should thus go off by himself, maundering as it seemed, about sunsets and wayside flowers, otherwise than in a temperate pastoral style. Certainly, London is no place for the indulgence of such moods—as the London reviewer said a little later : 'Notions like those of Mr. Wordsworth are evidently suited only to a life purely contemplative.' And after he was already gone a good while, far from Cheapside and the corner of Wood Street, and London was publishing, for a consideration, his—'call you 'em stanzos, shepherd ?' and the clever reviewer already quoted was instituting a comparison between him and Rousseau—of whom he was indeed the more quiet though perhaps no less effective English counterpart, —that became a little more apparent which we have been hinting at, that his mood was catching, and that the old charge brought against the idealist

Socrates of *corrupting the youths*, in the sense of indisposing them for civic action, might have been made good against this man. For many young men who might have otherwise served the State well, have been unsettled and perverted through that initial treachery of Wordsworth. Benjamin Franklins and Dick Whittingtons are not reared on such stuff as 'Tintern Abbeys' and 'Odes on Immortality' are made of. Nay, we will not emphasize unnecessarily the individuality of Wordsworth : if it had not been he no doubt it would have been another, and he himself had acted quite innocently in the matter ; but that Wordsworthian rapture, with all the mystic elements it held in solution, has since permeated all idealism. No genuine child of light but is liable now to sudden visitations from the wilderness—fallings from him, vanishings, illuminative misgivings, and the skirts of transcendent hopes. And once the wilderness has breathed upon him, it claims him more and more for itself. If he plead duty, the wisdom with which he is in new communion smiles : and he recognizes with a kind of exultation—like some nymph singled out of old by the eye of Heaven—that he must yield in the end. More and more the dull round of civic duties irks him, and his soul must spring forth in the end to that which woos it to its own fulfilment.—Meanwhile, has not the face of London itself suffered a change since that tall North-country youth walked its streets—

the first of them that are idle—and the hot young poets who followed in his footsteps? Has it not suffered green invasions of the passive trees in many a broad place where they wave, as though London were their Carthage against which they had sworn that it must be destroyed—*Delendum est Londinium?* Does not the noisy inundation of the surrounding country on bank-holidays indicate some yeasty ingredient of London life? Has not the civil war between Labour and Capital been embittered in a sense more acute of what civic poverty misses in life? Is not street-music a wailfuller cry? Are not, in one word, the cheerful times of Dick Whittington gone forever?

II

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE AT WORK

II

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CIVILIZED man is once more a savage: but he is not as if civilization had never been. He is no longer what he was when the failure within him of his ruder instincts left him social and stationary. He has now left his barbaric ennui behind him, and with a full heart turns once more to nature, his home and his mother. He can once again pitch his tent where he will and acknowledge no bonds. He is as one who goes forth into the morning woods, in whose brain yet flaunt the pomps and processions of his dreams. At every step he is delighted, and at every breath invigorated. He finds the forest deserted by his old foes, and the long grass free from snakes. His own appetite is not so robust and depredatory as formerly. Nature no longer tempts and disciplines him, but is quite old and submissive to her grown child. He carries no more a javelin or a bag of bullets. His desires are few, and he has no longer

any quarrel. He is at peace with nature, with his brethren, and with himself. 'His mind to him a kingdom is.'

He is no longer a barbarian. Those hands, folded now demurely as he passes on into the woods, a sun-flecked shadow, have never rested throughout that long dream from which he is awakened. They have reared him pyramids, temples, and cathedrals. Then he abstracted from nature her colours, and contrived himself a world with no grosser admixture. Finally with words he built up a world, in which form and colour were repeated as in a lake the mountains around it. Form, colour, and substance of the world he has now by heart, and his hands are folded while he meditates. The world is covered with the wrecks of his dream. The pyramid lies half sunken in the sands; the temple turns yellow on capes of Greece; the cathedral is a grey presence above the trampling and trundling of the town; within, pictures glow from the roof. Poetry alone, the final art, survives fragmentarily in the slow settling of his mind to contemplation.

The desire of the wilderness, which, at the period of the French Revolution, welled up in the mind of the Wordsworthian poets and disturbed them with joy, and which has remained the uncloying theme of all poets, meant something more than an innocent love of wild flowers and clear mountain air. That is something more than an imaginative yearning

with which the child of modern civilization follows with his eye the flight of the sea-bird, or breaks into utterance in the woodland. Wordsworth's song was the still small voice heard out of the tumult of that era. Simultaneously with all true individual development recurs the passion for nature and for the freedom of solitude. What did nature mean by these promptings but that the chosen people should obey her voice and go forth into the wilderness? And however soft and persuasive her voice, yet will nature be obeyed: and disobedience entails so much trouble. For why is it better, at each climax of civilization, that the chosen people should be gone? Because, while remaining in a system of things in which they have no longer any real concern, they are an anomaly in nature: for once man is glamoured with the thought of the wilderness he becomes indifferent. He is no longer a good citizen, and he infects with his indifference those who should be so. What has he to do with the State who cares nothing what laws are promulgated, what party is triumphant, what nation is shamed? The love of his country is merged in the love of the life-giving sod. His ideas, which concern himself alone, are taken and applied prematurely and generally. What means this precocious discontent with institutions, sacred and profane, but a loose idealism caught from the reckless talk of the Chosen People—so to name that curiously situated class of Idealists, who, as

Israel took over the brick-manufacture of Egypt, have in this century been taking over the manufacture of literature, and through it been directing politics and a society in which they have no longer any natural concern. Had those natural promptings, above described, been followed by the apparition of some modern equivalent to Moses and Aaron, and the peaceable withdrawal of idealists into the wilderness, there would have been no oppression in store for them and no uneasy dreams for the Pharaoh of civilization. The French Revolution was only the first of the great plagues.

Let us consider for a moment where we stand. A great literary period such as the nineteenth century opens with a joyous outburst of song, individual life rising buoyant on the wave of national life, and a few glad voices cresting with utterance the secular movement. Such voices were Goethe and Schiller in Germany; Wordsworth, Shelley, and others, in England. A studious lull ensues, and then comes a period of a more varied and ampler utterance, distinguished not alone by that early enthusiasm, but enriched and enlarged through the ensuing interval of general culture: this is the period of art and criticism, still upborne on the flowing tide of national life; in the Victorian era it has been the period of the idyll, the essay, the novel. At present we see that taking place which has taken place at the close of all similar epochs—the Periclean, the Augustan.

The tide of national life sets to ebb, and the general impulse of development subsiding with it, idealists inevitably divide into two classes—those who content themselves with maintaining a decadent literature, art, and science, and those who feel prompted to perpetuate the onward impulse in their own individual lives. If in the previous epoch individual life finds ample scope in culture, observation, and production, it now casts about to discover and further in itself a power which will enable it to live in and by itself. It is an aspiration which may bring inarticulateness and ineffectuality into the lives of those who embrace it ; but such as it is, it is a real thing, an innate impulse of the mind, and the few who elect to live by it are alone fulfilling the conditions of existence at that point of time. Those who do so are the Remnant. They are not unhappy, as the conventional suppose, but happy as those who are in love or fulfilling nature's purposes in any other way. The inheritor of nineteenth century culture seeks in his better moments no further inducement than that questioning impulse which works in his mind, as it worked in the minds of the Stoic inheritors of Greek and Roman culture. This it is with which he shall go forth and conquer. Behind him falls away the latest efflorescence of art and song, but in his seeming rejection of it he carries its seed into the future, the potentiality of new intellectual eras : for here is the paradox of the situation, that

with this Remnant, which seems to cut itself adrift from all progress, the eternal cell of human progress is lodged. Cast off, as it were, from the parent stem, fertilization ensues in the individual mind through that which Plato described as the assimilation of truth : 'What birth is to existence, belief is to truth.' So surely as there is an epoch of utterance, of imagination, of culture, it is followed by one of assimilation, asceticism, belief. Ideas which in the previous epoch have been adequately manifested and expressed in art and criticism begin then to take on the nature and semblance of doctrine, and the terms of religion which relate to a radical change in personality come into force : 'Ye have sown, now you must reap ;' 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' The impulse of criticism, to see things as in themselves they really are, yields, when satisfied, to contemplation, which aspires to receive into the individual life the irrefragable and immortal quality of ideas themselves.

And yet our doctrine of a Chosen People, for whom the time is come that they should go forth into the wilderness and build the City of God, may appear, to say the least of it, a little crude. It might be thought that the existence of a Chosen People, of a tribe of idealists, in the heart of civilization, is an unmixed advantage for both it and them : that they, on their side, find there material on which to operate, stuff

with which to cope, while, on the other side, the State is continually renovated and quickened through the abode within it of such a tribe. And up to a certain point this is true. The ripening in a nation of the children of light to a Chosen People is the ripening too of that nation. When wisdom and foresight appear in a citizen he inevitably becomes, like Joseph, the adviser of Pharaoh. And literature—what conceivable reason is there for its existence but the elevation of mankind? It is indeed no mean advantage for a State to have a Milton or a Bacon among its citizens. Whatever of grace and of spiritual impulse appears in a State, springs from the abode within it of a Chosen People. Yet there comes a time when the Chosen People and the State, if either are to fulfil the conditions of their existence, must take different ways—when Moses, or in our own time Thoreau, Whitman, Tolstoi, and others, appear, to call them forth to build in the wilderness the City of God. That is the period when the external application of ideas is become impossible, when the progress of the State comes to a standstill, when all development is individual and a Remnant is formed. Come forth, say then these prophets, you that believe or have good hope, ye have sown, now you must reap! Come forth, you that are quickened with that most ancient and most modern faculty by which men enjoy *themselves!* As your strength languishes without toil, so your wills languish without

belief! Come forth and inherit your ideas, and live the great life beneath sun and moon!

In the present case it was less Pharaoh who would not let the Chosen People go than the Chosen People who have wished to remain. For whereas up to this, idealists had followed their proper task mostly for their private gratification and as a parergon—and even that, a little earlier, with one eye on the stake and the torture-chamber—there was now, as one result of the French Revolution, a huge demand created for ideas themselves all the world over. And whereas in Egypt the Chosen People had shown an available dexterity in brick-making, it was now mainly their skill in writing for which a use was found: a facility of theirs which has been found to fit in so well that in the course of the century they have been taking over almost all the literary work which crops up in an advanced stage of civilization. The pen indeed seems to grow to the hand of an idealist, to carry his slender finger like an Arab horseman over the silent plains of foolscap. Take anyone else and set him down to write: he will botch and hesitate where your born literary man, in a trice, will have whipped his thoughts into their due places, as if really thoughts were the material with which nature had best fitted him to cope. And in an age when facilities count for so much, this facility of the literary man with thoughts has suggested to those powers who control the reins of affairs, the with-

drawal of him from tasks which others can do as well as he—brick-making and so on—and special licensing of him, as it were, to work according to his aptitude *in thoughts*, under wisely concessive supervision: to mould verses and build the lofty rhyme according to his liking. In this capacity, then, of thought-artisans, or, speaking generally, artists and critics, it is that the chosen people have remained within the civil jurisdiction, and gradually swollen to what we have called that curiously situated class of Literary Men, who, in virtue of the dexterity described, and the ever-increasing demand for it, have been advanced from point to point of honour and influence, while remaining as they started a class subservient to alien interests. What though Pharaoh is greater on his throne, has he not said, According unto your word shall all my people be ruled? Thus amid the stress of a ruder and a noisier commerce do the idealists ply their trade in the heart of civilization, conforming the methods of their own with those of the other, and forgetting the austere delights of the wilderness in the solace of fine linen and a golden chain.

What is the essential difference between work and slavery? While we belong by our sympathies to a community, not the most menial task set us to the end of the general advantage can be called slavery. When our occupation is a manual drudgery imposed upon us without our consent, that is no doubt a form

of slavery, but the mind can rise above it and even turn it to account, as did Epictetus. So long as the body labours for itself and for the mind, that is work. Once the mind consents to labour for the body, that is slavery. And it is the mind whose service conventional life requires—that faculty of original thought, at the centre of each man's nature, which alone utilizes all that the five senses bring him in and which alone makes it worth his while to be alive.

The case, so far as Literary Men are concerned, lies thus. Just as every man is born into the world with a certain amount of capacity for working with his hands, so is a certain capacity for thinking for himself implanted in the mind of each man, which it was the original intention of nature that he should develop. But just as the child of fortunate parents is not threatened with the alternative of manual labour or starvation, so the mind need not nowadays acquire ideas for itself in order to ward off vacuity. For here comes in the function of idealists—to minister intellectual interests in all kinds of ingenious ways to an unbelieving public : since indeed, under no conditions, must man live by bread alone.

And he who, rather than any other, may be likened to Joseph in Egypt, as having by reason of his prosperity become indirectly the cause of the captivity of his brethren, was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the artist. Not that he was an artist in the elder and absolute sense of the word in which Milton or

Michael Angelo were artists, who put themselves, and not their dead selves, into their works; yet in connection with art his name is all-important, as that of one who discovered, at a time when the atmosphere of Europe was unduly charged with ideas, and threatened to enter the life of each man with disastrous consequences to society, the vast capacities of art as an absorbent medium. He was nothing less than the Franklin of idealism, whose discovery withdrew the excess of ideas from the air, and made them, what they had scarcely been before, agents of civilization. Plato, where he defines what he terms belief as being to truth what birth is to existence, indicates an identification on the part of each man with his ideas which has a strange, old-world sound to people like us, who can hold, in virtue of the imaginative reason, all ideas in turn without attaching ourselves to any. In a word, Goethe inaugurated the method of St Beuve as contrasted with that of St. Paul. And as Joseph, whatever subsequent miseries were traceable to his prosperity in Egypt, remains to this day one of the glories of Israel, so must Goethe remain for ever one of the glories of idealism. We have ourselves made a pilgrimage to his laboratory in the peacefully laid out old town of Weimar, at that season when the year has rolled back its Autumnal mists and fruitfulness and the summer-dried roads are bright with dust under glooming skies—a square and self-suffi-

cient mansion, with posterior gardens, standing back by itself in an open and elevated space. Disturbed only by the presence of a government official (who seemed to feel himself identified with at least Goethe's ideas), we stood in that small sanctum where, morning after morning, those powerful and luminous eyes, directed upon the tablet, drew the great ideas of the world to incarnate themselves thereon before them. Into this quiet little chamber came the restless and swarming ideas which had lately seemed to cloud all the plains of Europe under their wings and minister ecliptic darkness to the performance of evil deeds: they came and were compelled within the magic inclosures of 'Wilhelm Meister,' of 'Faust,' which the master had drawn on his desk. They came to him out of every land and out of every clime, ideas which had dwelt richly in the Greek mind, which had illuminated the dark faces of Hebrew seers, which had obsessed heretics to their doom. And when his memoirs came to be written and the secrets of his laboratory more or less transpired, it was found that he had used no other magic instrument than that of perfect physical well-being; and if at times the ignobilities incident to life, the breath of the grey east wind, or mere humour remaining over from an indiscretion of diet, dulled its edge, he could yield without any uncouth or pathetic struggle, and acknowledge the elder powers of time and fate. He associated young

Schiller with himself as apprentice, or Zauberlehrling, and the work went forward briskly under their joint partnership: a glorious concern, which made of quiet little Weimar the very chief emporium of ideas in Europe. Out of their mere surplus, the two illustrious partners faced round on their contemporaries and amused themselves, like young men who fling hot pennies to the rabble, with discharging their desirable ideas, in form of epigrams, on people who had none. A glorious time they had of it, tasting here on earth the life of gods. And when at last Goethe died—his worn-out apprentice long since under the sod—insatiate to the last of the common sunlight, and bequeathed his intellectual fortunes to the artists (had he had his will he would have bequeathed unto them the kingdom of heaven!) it seemed indeed as though, by the establishment in each nation of a community of efficient idealists, the consummations of the promised land would not exclude the generosities of the flesh-pots of Egypt: as though that civilization which had made Goethe chief councillor would surrender its blind hand to the children of light, and suffer art to lead it into those new heavens and new earth of which our own Wordsworth and Shelley had caught a glimpse. But yet a little while, and the flood-tide which had upborne Goethe and Schiller had begun to ebb. Civilization parts off with its own concerns and its own huge problems, and idealists remain where the

flood-tide has raised them. Or shall they sink with it? Many will no doubt elect to do so, and become to Goethe and Schiller what Silius Italicus and Statius became to Horace and Vergil, ministering with an ever-dwindling imaginative reason to the requirements of civilization. For the rest—the Remnant—nothing remains but to discover a motive for existence within themselves, to search for the promised land of believers.

As with a thousand articles of small ware—puppets, engravings, pencils and what not—so the best thoughts may still be said to bear the impress, 'made in Germany.' They are made there out of the carcases of old books, in a way somewhat like that which Vergil divulges for the manufacture of bees. Germany itself remains as passive as a bee-hive to the in- and outgoings of its air-born swarms, which fly humming in large numbers thence into the more honied plains of other lands, and sojourn beneath alien sycamores. If you would know how beautifully pedantry plays into the hands of poetry, go to one of the thought-raising districts of Germany, look down from the neighbouring border of the forest upon a university town, and watch the lights come out at nightfall around the citadel, like spring primroses. At that hour the professors are leaving the libraries each with his day's gleanings put by securely in his note-book: two or three thoughts of the best quality disentangled patiently from tradition and

ready for use. Where do they all go to? Well, a child might ask the same question of the constant grimy yield of northern England: his parent only wonders how Newcastle can warm so many hearths. So the wonder here is, how these quiet little places should be equal to the demand of idealists all the world over. The prosperity of England is largely due to its extraordinary supply of coals, and England is called *schmutzig* by Germany, whose national trade leaves it at least cleaner hands. Yet, to a thoughtful mind, the coal-trade of England and the ideal-trade of Germany excite analogous misgivings. Paradoxes, shreds of reading, and dry sticks fagotted, employed by the Chosen People, at work in each nation, in defect of the aboriginal and plastic idea, begin to suggest some of those shifts to which Israel was reduced in Egypt when it became necessary to produce bricks without straw.

Make haste, therefore, ye Remnant, and begone! Be assured that the wave which still floats you in prosperity will recede, as it has done again and yet again, so far back into history as our documents afford us a glimpse! Take your occasion, and be not found in the receding of the wave! Threatening times are behind, when the State, which now tolerates and caresses you and arrays some of you in fine linen, must remember that, after all, it *is* the State, and that if it is to deal effectively with difficulties and dangers which, after all, concern itself alone, it must draw

itself together and clear of you, and go down, unbroken and resigned, in the great relapse. A Pharaoh will arise who knows you not, and who may resolve to 'deal wisely' with you, with the wisdom, namely, of this world. Let us glance at a time some fourteen hundred years nearer to our own than that night of dismay when Menephthah came hastily to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'Rise up now and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel, and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said!' The wave of progress has lately receded from Attica, leaving it once more the dusty home of the tettix, and is now high in the streets of Rome, flooding with the triumph of life and with the spoils of time and of memory the narrow precinct round which Romulus drove his bullock. Now Rome's hour is come. North and south, east and west, tramp its armies, clashing with nameless nations and emerging beside forlorn seas. Long straight roads, pointed out everywhere through the world, suck up into the seven hills whatever ministers to victorious idleness and Olympian laughter. Ever and again a conqueror returns out of the shadows of the east and leads a train of dazed princes up to the Capitol, and car after car of their spoils: here in a moment, dazzlingly disbursed, they will flash like old wine through the richly-nurtured current of Roman life. And here once again, in these favoured crowds, by these proud conquerors, ideas are acknowledged as a grace, perhaps

the crowning grace, of life. Here again, in this hurry to and fro of the fortunate Romans, goes in and out a Chosen People : idealists who place true empire in self-sufficiency and poets who can please even a conqueror's ear with the tale of the transitoriness of civic prosperity. Here a Memmius, driving hard through public and private life the horses of passion, relents now and then in discourse with his eccentric mutterer of verses, Lucretius. Here when Catullus lets loose, in the name of idealism, a swarm of stinging verses amid the barbaric revels of Julius Cæsar himself, that patrician, instead of nodding to one of his assassins, will send round one of his less sinister clients to the adventurous and lively poet, with an invitation to next day's revels. Here Mæcenas, aloft at every spectacle, and with all Octavian's secrets in his eyes, is not prouder of them than of the name of him whom he maintains in shy woodland solitude, Vergil. Here at the theatre, where Octavian and Octavia have taken their places, and Mæcenas and Agrippa, there is the proud noise of a general uprising when, stout and well-pleased, Horace enters. And why not ? Why shall not idealism be exalted with the tide of Roman fortune, and while Rome glitters with all the jewels of the earth, gather to itself all knowledge, all traditions, and the mystic hoards, now disclosed by conquest, of the East ? Shall not idealism sit, too, on the Capitol as Rome's ghostly bride ? Shall not Vergil and Horace and the Stoics and

Epicureans join with Augustus in leading in the Golden Age? Shall not Vergil, in gratitude for his 'unhonoured leisure,' mingle the shade of Julius Cæsar with those forms which, clad in whiteness, look from the threshold of Olympus? Shall not Horace waive his republicanism, and, forgetting that melancholy dreamer, Marcus Brutus, salute the god in Augustus? And by-and-by, when Augustus is an older but still a present deity, but of Vergil and Horace only their names and their works remain, why in truth should not Ovidius Naso, to please the brilliant and agreeable courtiers who numbered him with themselves, write in easy-gliding elegiacs his 'Ars Amandi?' As a matter of fact, however, this work was felt by old Augustus to fall short of the traditions of Vergil and Horace, and he abruptly ordered Ovid into the wilderness, where, about that moment, an idealist was secretly wandering whose idealism was destined to turn back the numbering of the years and to supplant the idealism of Horace and Vergil far up into the future to the era of Goethe and Schiller. Years pass, not many, and the present divinity of Augustus is exchanged for his divine memory. Idealism is no longer seated on the right hand in council, but cowers under the fierce dominion of a series of madmen. The tradition of Vergil and Horace is indeed not only tolerated but encouraged; but idealism, as the ghostly bride of civilization, must not remonstrate with the whims and extravagances of

her lord. There is a Pliny, the shadow of Cicero; a Silius Italicus, the shadow of Vergil; a Martial, the shadow of Horace. At odd moments of license, too, a more genuine literature of indignation finds vent —'si natura negat, facit indignatio versum.' Also there has appeared in the State, lurking in high and low places, a new idealism—the idealism of the wilderness and of the Remnant, an idealism which only concerns the idealist himself and those who, like him, will commit themselves to the doctrine, 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them'—there is a Seneca, wavering between the service of God and of Mammon, and whose vacillation at length costs him dear; there is an Epictetus, who must pursue his meditations under interruption, while his master is playfully twisting his leg. At length a new Cæsar arises who knows not idealists, Domitian, who in the year 89 A.D., without the intervention of any Moses, acts in a way which recalls, to some extent, the action to which Menephthah was so reluctantly constrained: he drives the idealists out of Rome.—Well, Statius and Silius Italicus (who managed, indeed, to remain) no doubt said to themselves, 'Horace and Vergil were divine poets; why cannot we also be divine, who can read like them the Alexandrians, and themselves also?' just as we may say now, 'Goethe and Schiller were gods, and Michael Angelo and Leonardo; why, then, do we fail of the divine accent and manner, with our wider

reach of thought, with our incomparably richer experience?' and we cannot see that, though we have the tongues of men and of angels, no rigour of toil and self-devotion of study will avail to reproduce the bourgeonings of civilization, the art which itself is nature.

And poetry?—Ye bards, it is not you will utter lamentation, who desire only a leader, stronger than yourselves, to lead you forth into the wilderness! You will then sing no longer to a critical and moody public a brief, wine-flushed note, but to the memory of races—epics once more, and thronged with heroic forms. Already these forms have swept past you in your hour of vision, and you reached out to them from your environment, but could not attain to them. Great fables revealed themselves unto you in parts, but you were not ready for them and they became a despair to you. They have blessed all your youth with promise, but manhood comes and finds you still waiting, and age is at hand and you have done nothing: you have seen them no more. Every youth is ardent to speak, and thinks himself a great poet. Probably he is right: but most men strike their colours point by point till they have no foot of truth left to call their own. Life has not been to them what they bargained for; civilization has been too much for them—circumstances over which they had no control. The gods, at least, have not loved them. And at length some dry-eyed poet, glancing

sidelong and half in fear at the watching heavens, once so blue and fortunate to his early vision, pens a last blasphemy of them and, leaving his tablets behind him and covering his eyes, hurries down into the way of death.

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